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KGB: THE CENTER AND THE RESIDENCIES

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Relations between KGB Headquarters (*Tsentr*—the Center) in Moscow and KGB field stations (residencies) abroad constitute the core of the centralized system of the KGB. These relations are structured on the principle of strict military subordination. I shall review two types of relations: formal/bureaucratic and unofficial, involving the human factor.

Formal Relationships

Although formally the residencies are subordinated to the Chairman of the State Security Committee (KGB), actually the residencies fall under the KGB First Chief Directorate (FCD) and get orders directly from the Chairman in very rare cases—only on global operations of extreme importance. A Deputy Chairman of the KGB is responsible for the supervision of the activities of the FCD.

Candidacy of each KGB resident is approved personally by the Chairman. Some of the residents, stationed in important countries such as the United States, Great Britain, France, West Germany, Japan, and India, have meetings with the Chairman on a more or less regular basis—usually before they go to new assignments and when they come back home on leave.



Kryuchkov

In every other sense the activities of the residencies are supervised or guided by the Chief of the FCD, presently General Vladimir A. Kryuchkov. The Chief of the FCD is responsible for global coordination of the KGB intelligence effort. He is probably the only person in the FCD who is entrusted by the Soviet Politburo to have detailed knowledge of the long-range plans of the Soviet leaders in external policy matters, as well as military plans which can directly influence the global situation and the balance of power between the United States and the Soviet Union. The Chief of the FCD has everyday working contacts with the Chairman of the KGB and the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. He

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personally approves the plans and guidelines for major operations of the KGB abroad. The Chief of the FCD also coordinates activities of all geographic and special departments and services within the FCD. He is responsible for the quality and substance of the political, military, economic, and high technology information which the residencies abroad collect and which he forwards to the Politburo. The Chief of the FCD personally supervises a few special cases of important Soviet assets abroad.

The daily routine work of the residencies abroad is supervised by the FCD geographic departments and other components of the FCD including Directorate S (illegals), Directorate K (counterintelligence), Service I (information), Directorate T (scientific and technical intelligence), and Service A (active measures). But, before approving a major field operation, the chiefs of the departments, directorates, and services report the substance of such operations directly to the Chief, FCD or one of his designated deputies.

The KGB station chief (resident) in a foreign country has limited autonomy. His main responsibility is the supervision of the daily activities of the residency and implementation of the FCD's operational guidelines to field components.

The responsibilities of the resident (or in his absence—the deputy resident) are:

1. Supervising, with the help of component chiefs, the residency's main components—Line PR (political intelligence), Line KR (external counterintelligence), Line X (scientific and technological intelligence), Line N (illegals support);
2. Supervising the targeting of the major political, military, industrial, and economic institutions of the foreign country;
3. Supervising political action (active measures) activities of the residency in that country;
4. Maintaining the continuity of developing and recruiting new contacts and assets;
5. Supervising the intelligence collection process. Although it is the reports officer who prepares all intelligence information cables which the residency sends to Moscow on a daily basis, the resident is totally responsible for the reliability and quality of the information in intelligence reports.
6. Forwarding, for Center approval, annual residency plans for the penetration of major political parties, government institutions, business circles, and mass media. The resident also submits to the Center a plan for agent recruitment for the coming year. (The existence of such plans is a phenomenon typical of the highly centralized and planned Soviet socialist system.) Most such plans are impossible to fulfill. Each year the resident has to produce a large amount of paperwork on adjustment and readjustment of

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such plans. The plan is also a tool of the psychological pressure placed upon the field officers in their recruitment efforts.

7. Supervising the recruitment effort against United States citizens stationed in that country, and reporting regularly to the Center on this effort.
8. Controlling residency finances and preparing the annual budgetary plan for Center approval. In most foreign countries, the resident has the right to approve payment to the agent of no more than one-hundred fifty dollars per meeting. Payments over this amount are subject to approval by the Center. Important agents of the KGB receive quite large payments, but the Center must approve such payments in advance.
9. Providing the Center with regular reports on the situation in the Soviet community in the country of his assignment—for example, cases of violations of the "Rules of Behavior of Soviet Citizens Stationed Abroad."
10. Preparing fitness reports on each officer in the residency. These, too, go to the Center.

The KGB residency in any country of the world is a miniature model of the structure of the FCD. Residency components (or lines) are totally subjected to the supervision and control by the corresponding macro components of the Center. Residency officers write reports on agent meetings and developmental contacts on a regular basis. Before an officer's report is mailed to the Center, he submits it for approval to his line chief. The report is then submitted for approval to the resident, who personally signs all reports to the Center.

In the FCD at the Center, mail from the residency is received by the chiefs of the geographic departments, services, or directorates (depending upon the component of origin in the residency).

The chief of the department, service or directorate reads only mail on the most important cases. He then assigns incoming correspondence to the chief of the country desk who, after reading it and making notes, assigns it to desk officers, each of whom supervises several cases. A reply on each letter or report goes back through the same chain of command, back to the residency and personally to the field case officer. That means that in reporting, supervising, and analyzing of each case, at least seven junior and high-ranking officers are involved. It is a complicated procedure, but the leaders of the FCD consider such a system to be effective because, in their opinion, it minimizes operational and other mistakes and handicaps.

The KGB resident has no authority to approve any recruitment of agents in the field. He normally sends his recommendation on each case to the chief of the department in the Center. The process of formal approval of the recruitment is slow and sometimes painstaking. Everybody in the aforementioned chain of command is involved in it. Final approval of any recruitment must come from the Deputy Chief of the FCD or sometimes from the Chief of

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the FCD himself. The obvious shortcoming of this system is that in case of some operational scandal—the exposure of an agent by the foreign counterintelligence service, or a dangle operation against the KGB by intelligence organs of the foreign country—it is sometimes difficult to name the person responsible for overlooking the danger signals in the development of the case. There is a tendency to pick the field case officer and his immediate superior as the scapegoats.

The Center (each department, directorate, or service) also has an annual recruitment plan despite the fact that it contradicts any operational logic. Nobody dares to change this principle, which applies similarly to the Soviet economy and practically every other aspect of Soviet life. It makes this whole sophisticated system of handling cases vulnerable to mistakes and double agent operations against the KGB. In November and December each year, dozens of recruitments are hastily approved and reported to the Chairman of the KGB to demonstrate a higher level of success than in the previous year.

The FCD prefers to keep the officers specializing on certain countries assigned to the same country desks or residencies throughout their career. In the opinion of the leadership of the KGB, this practice provides the FCD with experienced specialists with good knowledge of the language, political system, economy, military establishment, and of the national psychology of the assigned country. This type of personnel policy makes the relationship between the Center and residencies much closer than just formal bureaucratic ties.

Informal Relationships

Despite FCD policies described above, in some cases the resident does not return to his geographic department after he finishes his assignment. This is especially true for residents of high military rank—colonel or general. Officers of this rank either get higher positions in the Center or draw assignments as residents to more important countries. Most other officers of the residency returning to their FCD component at the Center spend two to four years before getting second or third assignments to the same country. When they return to the desk at the Center, they are replaced in the residency by officers of that same desk.

This system leads to the development of close personal relationships (positive or negative) between officers in the Center and in the residency. On many occasions, the desk officers face difficult dilemmas. For instance, some of them are handling the cases of residency line chiefs who are normally medium- or high-ranking officers. Some of these chiefs, upon their return home, get higher positions in the department. Thus, the lower-ranking desk officers tend to be restrained in analyzing cases of their potential superiors. Negative letters are written only when the attitude of the chief of the desk or the chief of the department toward certain cases is negative.

I personally witnessed quite dramatic examples of this phenomenon. On several occasions, in my presence, both the resident and his deputy had been figuring out the names of the authors of the "negative" letters from the Center

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by "decoding" initials on the papers. To avoid eventual confrontation with the high-ranking officers in the residency, the desk officers frequently had sent private letters to these officers explaining that it was the department chief or his deputy who insisted on sending letters containing criticism. Such private correspondence helps the residency officers know exactly what is going on in the Center, which of them are "favorites," and which, at least potentially, are facing trouble. I recall that the formal approval of the recruitment of one of my agents was delayed by the Center for at least one extra year, primarily because the deputy chief of the geographic department had personal negative feelings toward me. On several occasions, I also witnessed the approval of the recruitment of quite unnecessary agents in order to secure the promotion of the field officer who enjoyed a favorable attitude from the superior officer of the geographic department.

Unofficial relations between the Center and the residency sometimes constitute a violation of the regulations of the KGB and even of Soviet law. According to KGB regulations, officers, regardless of rank, cannot recruit junior officers as their personal informers inside the residency. In practice, such cooption is done only in special cases when there is serious suspicion of a field officer's loyalty, suspicion that an officer is being approached by foreign intelligence or counterintelligence services, or suspicion of embezzlement of KGB funds. To run such an operation, a secret but official approval of at least the Deputy Chairman of the KGB is needed. Such an investigation would be run by a special section of Directorate K (external counterintelligence) of the FCD. At the same time, routine checks on the officer's loyalty and contacts with foreigners are the prerogative of the KR Line of the residency.

I was a personal witness to violations of these rules. Once when I was stationed abroad, I was approached by the residency chief of Line PR. During a brief but emotional conversation, he explained to me that my future career was in his hands. He knew that, upon his return to Moscow, he would become deputy chief of a geographic department in the Center. He intimated that he would "take care" of my career if I would regularly report to him on what was being said about him behind his back by the other officers of the residency. Moreover, he told me that the current resident was "a fool" who did not know how to work in that country. This residency line chief wanted me to report to him on the resident, too. After I rejected cooperation with him, he created quite difficult conditions for me. As I learned much later from a friendly code clerk and the residency driver, the line chief took his time to build up quite a sophisticated scheme against me with the involvement of at least two other officers whom he managed to recruit as his personal informers. Even after this chief returned home, these informers were reporting on me by means of personal letters to him. At the Center, this line chief managed to force the resident to turn one of the important cases I was handling over to a different officer, and he delayed the approval of two of my recruitments. As I heard from the other officers in the FCD, such dramatic stories are not unusual. Situations like that contribute to the feeling of insecurity and damage the morale of the officers both in the residency and in the Center.

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Competition for promotions, together with feelings of uncertainty for their professional future, trigger jealousy and sometimes personal hatred among officers.

Undoubtedly, the fact that most of the officers are specializing on the countries of their first assignments is advantageous for the intelligence collection effort by the FCD. But, at the same time, because the same people are working for the same desk for many years, the relationships between officers in this FCD area can become very complicated and cause a variety of negative side effects. While the KGB probably remains the least corrupt institution within the Soviet Union, this does not at all mean that the KGB is free from corruption. It is common practice, between the high-positioned FCD officers in particular, to engage in such corruption. When deputy chiefs of the FCD or chiefs of the services, directorates, or departments go abroad to inspect the residencies, all their expenses—often including some of ~~their~~ shopping bills—are normally paid by the residency. There are no funds for such expense in the residency and these costs usually are written off as “operational.” This kind of transaction violates KGB regulations and Soviet law.

The Chief of the FCD, General Kryuchkov, himself is not free from corruption. While I was stationed abroad under cover as a correspondent for an important Soviet news magazine, the editor-in-chief of the magazine visited from Moscow. I knew that he was a personal friend of General Kryuchkov. But it was quite a surprise to me to learn from a cable sent by the Center that this editor was visiting for a special mission and would need to spend the equivalent of a few hundred dollars to cover expenses during this “mission.” I knew every detail of his itinerary and I was sure that the editor was not involved in any special operations. While in country, the residency bought the editor quite an expensive high fidelity stereo system. Everybody knew that it was embezzlement of the government’s money. But nobody dared criticize the decisions of the Chief of the FCD. The deputy resident told me that I had to keep my mouth shut and that I was “not to discuss anything about the editor’s finances with other officers.” He told me also that if we could win the editor’s sympathy, we would be in “good shape” career-wise, because of the closeness of the editor to General Kryuchkov. Before the editor returned to Moscow, the deputy resident arranged meetings with three important KGB agents of influence in a local political party and with the number one Soviet agent of influence in another party. The results of these meetings were summarized in the operational cable classified “SECRET” and addressed personally to General Kryuchkov. The role of the visiting editor as a participant in the meetings was grossly exaggerated. It was obvious that this “operation” had two goals: to inflate the reputation of the editor in the eyes of his friend—Chief of the FCD—and to have an official excuse for providing him money from the residency’s vault.

Conclusion

The relationships between the KGB Center and its residencies abroad are complex and diversified. As seen from the above, these relations reflect high

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professionalism and, at the same time, are bureaucratic with a variety of shortcomings. Sociologically, such relations are typical of any part of the Soviet socialist structure. Proper understanding by US intelligence of the vulnerabilities inherent in relations between the FCD Center and its residencies can greatly enhance actions aimed at countering the Soviet intelligence effort and for possible penetration of the KGB.

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